



The Art Book

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An A to Z guide to 500 great painters and sculptors from medieval to modern times, it debunks art historical classifications by throwing together brilliant examples of all periods, schools, visions and techniques. Each artist is represented by a full-page colour plate of a definitive work, accompanied by explanatory and illuminating information on the image and its creator. Glossaries of artistic movements and technical terms are included, making this a valuable work of reference as well as a feast for the eyes. By breaking with traditional classifications, The Art Book presents a fresh and original approach to art: an unparalleled visual sourcebook and a celebration of our rich and multi-faceted culture.

The Art Book Details

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From Reader Review The Art Book for online ebook

Bob Hartley says

This book is the Linkin Park of the art book world. Granted it doesn't have to be as scrupulous as a doctor giving a prostate exam but it's still quite vague and doesn't give much away. Still useful if you're doing your GCSEs though.

Bogdi says

It would be a mistake to take this book for what it is not: a serious, in-depth treatise on art. No, it's a picture book that gives almost twitter-like info on artists. Every artist included has one picture/one chance to make an impression on the public (art novices).

The good things about it: the wealth of periods it hits on and the quality of the reproductions, to say nothing of its size (I have the pocket size version, in case there are others). I also enjoyed the little gimmick: listing artists in alphabetical order juxtaposes somebody like Lorenzo Lotto with Louis Morris. It reminds me of a similar encyclopedia of painting I used as a young teen. This might similarly spur young art lovers to explore further.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

I was required to take an art appreciation class in college to graduate--and I loved it! So getting this book was a natural follow-up. It won Illustrated Book of the Year and is in the Top Five Popular Art Books on Goodreads. As stated in the introduction, this book is "an A to Z guide to 500 great painters and sculptors from medieval to modern times." It's that classic coffee table book--I even recently spotted it on a list for the best of the kind. I'm not the kind that collects those--in fact this is the only book of the kind I own. But if any such book should be part of every home, surely it's an art book like this one, where the great Western artists and (alas only) one of their representative masterpieces is laid before you. This is also by far the heaviest book I own--you could do strength training with it--but it's worth its weight. A real keeper.

Maria Panteli says

I got this as a gift recently and I must say it's amazing. I am a bit of an art geek and I always have been. I enjoy this book because of the variety of different artists in it; all of which have contributed to my fascination with art in some way.

I know some of the artists pretty well and some are completely new to me, and I love that.

I could spend hours just flicking through this book and still not have read/studied it completely. I don't think I'll ever get bored of this book.

It would make a great gift or coffee table book too.

Eileen says

This really should have been called *The Western Art Book*. There is only one Asian artist represented, and Latin America is limited to a few Cubans and Mexicans. Everyone else is completely absent.

Unlike other reviews, I actually liked the alphabetical arrangement of the artists, as it really demonstrated the diversity of the North American and European art tradition. You have this on one page and this on the next.

Tidar Rachmadi says

I guess, no real artists really read this art book. But, this book is very artsy on the cover and 1000 times more artsy inside. And best of all, it's from Phaidon.

Anton Klink says

This book sets out to present one work of art from 500 different artists. This sounds good in theory, but since all the artists and their one work of art are listed alphabetically, the end result is eclectic and chaotic. This would have been a much better book, had the same contents been arranged chronologically or at least thematically. As it stands though, the paintings (there are a few sculptures and installations here and there, but I will mostly refer to just paintings) jump all over the place in time and subject. It also seems unfair to have some amazing, iconic painters reduced to just one work of art, which is hardly representative of their overall contribution, whereas others (especially some of the more contemporary artists) could easily have been left out of the book altogether.

The print quality might have been ok 20 years ago (my copy is the 1994 large format coffee table version, not the more recent 2005 pocket size edition), but is below average by today's standards. The resolution is acceptable, but the colours are quite dull. Also many of the photos also display a strange yellow and orange colour cast, making the paintings look worse than they should.

The captions provide adequate details both about the paintings and the artists. You will learn a detail or two about the paintings, the lives of the artists and even a few fun facts every now and then. It is somewhat sad though to read references to all sorts of other paintings done by the same artists. The format of the book dictates that we can only see one painting per artist and to see the rest, we would have to turn to other books or the internet.

The selection of artists has a decidedly Western and Christian bias. There are a few Japanese and South-American artists here and there, but the overwhelming majority are from mainland Europe and English speaking countries. Also the depicted scenes (at least until the beginning of the 20th century) are from either Roman or Christian mythology or Western European aristocratic and everyday life. After a while, seeing the same scenes over and over again, even if depicted by different artists, becomes quite monotonous and boring.

The book covers a vast range of genres. As a consequence, you may find your favourite genres either under-represented or too many examples from genres you don't care about. I found myself paying closer attention

to the art from around the 16th until the middle of the 19th century, which I consider the golden age and pinnacle of painting. Art from before the 16th century is a bit too simplistic for my taste and with the rise of photography in the 19th century, painting seems to have lost focus and spiralled into an identity crisis, from which it has yet to recover. Impressionism was as an interesting experiment and the last of the tolerable departures from traditional painting, but everything after that - I just found myself turning the pages without even looking at the names of the authors of yet another solid cube, formless splatter or weird installation. It is a matter of taste of course, but I found too much art I didn't care for and thus will most likely not be keeping the book.

There are also some fairly obvious errors in the book, where the captions talk about one painting, but the picture is of a completely different one altogether. One example is on page 98. The picture is of a beautiful landscape painting by the venerated landscape artist Frederic Church. However the captions talk about an active volcano Cotopaxi supposedly being in the painting, which actually is nowhere to be found. Only a Google image search turns out another equally impressive painting by the same artist, where a volcano named Cotopaxi can be clearly seen, but it is obviously a completely different painting from the one in the book. I caught the error purely by chance just by browsing around and I haven't read the captions of all the art pieces, so who knows, how many similar errors are in the book.

In conclusion, with either a chronological or thematical arrangement, this would have made a passable art book. Unfortunately the paintings are arranged alphabetically by artists, which provides for a very chaotic reading experience. If you take it as a coffee book only to browse here and there, this book is ok, even if the quality of the repros is below average. If however you are interested in only certain time periods or art styles, you'd be better off purchasing a more focused book with better quality prints. If however you want to own just one book on art, I recommend the immeasurably better and magnificent "Art" by DK, which is my opinion is one the best books on art ever published.

Maia Sinclair says

I just luvvvv this book. i carry it around whenever i have to travel because it is fun to read and reread. it teaches you a lot about art in accessible and convenient way. Just the kind of book you like reading. hours can pass by and you barely notice it. :) luv it!

Michelle says

This was really an interesting concept. Hundreds of artists, drawn from many times, movements, places, one page spread per artist--one work, one short explanation, a little attempt to locate the artist in time and movement. I couldn't stay out of this at work--we kept going back, opening it up, arguing over whether the work chosen was the right one. That was a lot of fun. (Weeping Woman for Picasso???? Ceci n'est pas un pipe for Magritte? Really?) I must say, it did help that I was pretty familiar with most of the movements. It might have been tough to follow a narrative if I had had no idea about who was who. And one other caveat--this might not be a good choice for a conservative homeschool family. In addition to a large number of classical nudes, to which I have less objection, there are also quite a few more modern ones some of which I would not want my kids to see. But this was really, really fun and if you have a friend or two that knows a little bit about artists, you can have some really, really fun discussions/arguments/lively conversations about the artwork choices.

Diana Habashneh says

very simple, a photo of the artist work, brief about the artist
it gives you hints, not very helpful but it's a joy to the eye, you can like a painting or a sculpture and go do the research yourself, which is not a bad idea after all, that is not a bad idea after all

Mandy says

Love this book - it is alphabetical order of artists, with a picture of their work, and some biological detail. I particularly love the big version, that I saw at a school. The mini version I have at home is a bit small for some of the detail to come through.

Thuraya Batterjee says

this book presents a fresh and original approach to art.

It is an essential reference to those of us who are always looking for inspiration..

And a good visual sourcebook too..

Kristen says

Plain and simple: This was the book that made me fall in love with the visual arts. Almost every time I went to the library as a girl, I would borrow this book. I would sit and look at it for hours, never getting bored with it. I still haven't purchased this book for my collection, but I am planning on it soon!

Erin says

I've always wanted to learn more about art and art history, and this was a good sampling. It takes 500 different artists and shows one work from each of them. It was a nice introduction to artists I hadn't heard of before, and it gave a brief synopsis of the work and the artist.

This isn't an in-depth exploration. It often left me wanting more -- I expected this book to serve as a jump-off point, so that's a good thing. I flagged dozens of pages to research further. I should note that, being an art book, there is a bit of nudity in here. Some of it is artful and appropriate, but there were some that I felt the artist used only for shock value. But that's an entirely different debate...

Note: there are two versions of this book: A large coffee-table sized one published in 1994, and a smaller

pocket-sized one published in 2005. I read the big one, which was nice, because the pictures were full-page and I could see them well.

Kris says

Much to my husband's dismay, I took the binding off this book and put each page in a page protector; it now takes up two binders. But now, for \$19.95 plus page protectors and binders, I have over 500 pieces of art that can be passed around my classroom.

Well, most of them can be passed around my classroom. I'm struggling with the nudity. Why is it more acceptable to me in an ancient Greek statue than in modern art? Hmmmmm...
